

280 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S
HISTORY

by long experience he had found was never to
be gain'd by
concessions nor indulgence, that the hand of
God was visi-
bly in it not only in bringing their villanies to
light, but by
turning their own malicious designs upon
themselves, and
had cast them into the pit they had dug for
others/ ¹

The reign of James II and the revolution which
ended it
can be predicted from the letters of the Duke
of York.
There is, however, one startling change.
Nothing indicates
that James was likely to pose as the champion
of toleration,
as he did during the last two years of his
reign. On the
contrary, in the spring of 1680 James writes
exultantly to
the Prince of Orange that there had been the
greatest
alteration for the better that could be
imagined, and attri-
butes this to the purging of the commissions
of the peace
of all disaffected people, thus encouraging the
old friends
of the monarchy, the cavalier or church party.
If the King
would continue steady on the course he has
now laid down,
he will be more master and in a better
condition than he
has been these many a year/ ²

A more favourable view of James's character
can be
gathered from the Memoirs of the Earl of
Ailesbury.
Participation in Jacobite plots against William
forced
Ailesbury to go into exile, where he wrote his
Memoirs
forty years after the Revolution. They are
naturally full of

inaccuracies and rambling digressions, but nevertheless reproduce the impressions of a loyal adherent of James, who witnessed what he recorded and had both a memory for picturesque incidents and the power to describe them in vigorous language. If Macaulay had known of their existence they would have supplied him with many striking touches.

¹ Life of James, i. 690.

~ Groen van Prinsterer, v. 393.